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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 1/28/09

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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

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Prime Minister's schedule, January 27

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
January 28, 2009

07:33

Took a walk around his official residence.

10:02

Attended a cabinet meeting at the Kantei.

13:23

Arrived at his personal office in Nagata-cho.

13:52

Arrived at his official residence.

15:59

Met Vice Minister of Finance for International Affairs Shinohara and Deputy Foreign Minister Otabe.

16:41

Met Ambassador to China Miyamoto.

17:01

Met incoming and outgoing supreme court justice Kanetsuki and Izumi.

17:33

Attended a meeting of lawmakers in the Diet Building.

17:42

Attended a Lower House plenary session.

17:53

Issued an official appointment to Met Toshiba Advisor Morimoto as a member of the APEC Business Advisory Commission, with METI Trade Policy Bureau Director General Okada and Foreign Ministry Economic Affairs Bureau Director General Suzuki.

18:11

Met LDP Policy Research Council Chairman Hori, New Komeito Policy Research Council Chairman Yamaguchi, and co-chairs of the ruling camp's project team on anti-piracy measures Nakatani and Sato, with Chief Cabinet Secretary Kawamura.

18:59

Dined at a Japanese restaurant in Tsukiji with his family members.

21:14

Returned to his official residence.

4) Order to prepare for MSDF anti-piracy mission to be issued today under existing law; Prime minister plans to present new law to Diet in March

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
January 28, 2009

The government will convene a Security Council of Japan meeting today to confirm a policy course or expediting preparations for dispatching the Maritime Self-Defense Force on an anti-piracy

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mission in waters off Somalia under existing legislation. Following this, Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada is expected to issue an order within the day to the Maritime Self-Defense Force to prepare for the dispatch.

Liberal Democratic Party Policy Research Council Chairman Kosuke Hori, his New Komeito counterpart Natsuo Yamaguchi and others last night called on Prime Minister Taro Aso at his office and requested an early maritime policing action order to dispatch the MSDF dispatch under the SDF Law.

In response, the prime minister emphatically said: "It is necessary to deal with pirates at sea under existing law. Sooner or later, I would like to ask the ruling parties to make preparations for (new) legislation." The prime minister later indicated to the press corps that a new law would be presented to the Diet "around March."

Ahead of this, policy chiefs of the LDP and New Komeito met and endorsed the ruling bloc project team's interim report specifying: (1) an early dispatch of the MSDF under existing legislation, and (2) a plan to submit a new law to the Diet in early March.

Yamaguchi asked that joint exercises between the MSDF and the Japan Coast Guard that will be conducted before the dispatch should be opened to the public.

Following the defense minister's order to prepare for the dispatch, the government will formulate at an early date an action plan specifying a lineup of destroyers and specific duties. The Defense Ministry, in collaboration with police authorities and the JCG, will draw up a set of action standards listing specific cases allowing using weapons in legitimate self-defense and emergency evacuation.

5) Bilateral pact eyed for funding Guam relocation

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
January 28, 2009

Japan will enter into a bilateral arrangement with the United States regarding the planned relocation of U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam in the process of realigning U.S. forces in Japan, the Foreign Ministry said yesterday. The arrangement will specify that the Japanese government will set the ceiling of its funding for this Guam relocation at 2.8 billion dollars (approx. 250 billion yen). In addition, the pact will prohibit the U.S. government from using the money for any other purposes.

The government has for the first time earmarked spending related to the Guam relocation in its budget for fiscal 2009, and the pact is intended to prepare a legal framework.

The Japanese and U.S. governments are expected to sign the bilateral pact in early February. The government will ask the Diet during its current session for its approval of the pact.

In order to prepare for Diet deliberations, Foreign Minister Nakasone will visit Okinawa Prefecture for two days from Jan. 31. During his visit to the island prefecture, Nakasone will visit Futenma airfield and Camp Schwab, where an alternative facility is planned to be built. He will also exchange views the Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima and other local officials.

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In May 2006, the Japanese and U.S. governments agreed on a roadmap for the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan. Based on the roadmap,

the United States will relocate 8,000 Marines and 9,000 family members to Guam. Japan is to provide financial backing for that purpose.

"Japan will fund the Guam relocation for multiple years," a senior Foreign Ministry official said. "We will enter into this agreement since we need binding over the U.S. side as well," the official added.

6) Okinawa calls for offshore relocation for Futenma alternative

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
January 28, 2009

The government yesterday held a meeting of its working team in Tokyo with officials from Okinawa's prefectural and municipal government officials to discuss the pending issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station (to a coastal area of Camp Schwab in Okinawa Prefecture's northern coastal city of Nago). In the meeting, Okinawa Prefecture and Nago City asked the government to fully consider the local request to move the alternative facility to an offshore area as much as possible. The government reported on the progress of an environmental impact assessment currently conducted around the relocation site. "We would like to promote the plan in an appropriate manner while considering the local living and natural environment," a government official said, seeking local understanding.

In addition, an official from Ginoza Village, which is situated on an extension of the alternative facility's tarmac, said, "We want the government to do this based on the agreement to avoid flying over the village." A government official explained, "There is no change in the agreement to avoid flying over the village, but they could fly over there in some training."

7) Abe calls for cooperation on measures against global warming

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
January 28, 2009

Tsuyoshi Yamashita, Riyadh

Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who is visiting the Middle East as a prime ministerial special envoy, addressed the Global Competitiveness Forum on January 27. In his speech, Abe called for cooperation on measures against global warming, stating: "Japan has been proceeding with a project to develop innovative technologies that can achieve economic growth and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions at the same time. Buds of cooperation with Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia, have begun to sprout."

Abe also indicated that the global economic crisis has resulted from an excessive concentration of speculative funds in U.S. and European markets, noting: "Because there not enough investment opportunities in emerging nations and developing countries, blood concentrated in a part of the body and the part burst." He added: "Countries in the world should advance measures for the promotion of innovation."

8) Japanese officials on humanitarian mission requested to submit disembarkation cards before arriving on Kunashiri

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TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Full)
January 28, 2009

(Kenji Nakajima, Moscow)

Japanese Foreign Ministry officials and others on a humanitarian mission were not allowed to enter the disputed Kunashiri Island yesterday, according to informed sources. Russian authorities requested that the members of the mission submit disembarkation (E/D) cards before landing on the island. Such submission would mean that the Japanese side accepts the Russian claim that the four northern islands belong to Russia, so the officials rejected the request. The Russian side intends also to require Japanese visitors

to the four islands under the visa-free exchange visit program to submit E/D cards. If the Russian side does not withdraw the request, the mutual visit program will inevitably be affected.

According to the Foreign Ministry, the Japanese officials and five civilians belonging to a relief organization left Nemuro, Hokkaido, on a chartered vessel carrying medical and other aid materials early yesterday and arrived off the Kunashiri Island on the morning of the same day.

Those in charge of Japan's humanitarian aid to the four northern islands have been allowed to enter the islands only with identification cards, based on an agreement that both sides' legal positions "will not be undermined," in line with the visa-free exchange program among Japanese and Russian residents on the four islands.

But the Russian side has indicated that it would seek Japanese visitors to the four islands under the mutual visit program to submit E/D cards starting 2009. Russia applied this policy to the transport of humanitarian aid. For coordination, the chartered ship left the port behind the initial schedule.

Unless the Russian side withdraws the request, the visa-free visit program, which is scheduled to resume this spring, may be suspended.

9) Number of foreign travelers to Japan decreased in latter half of last year, affected by recession, yen appreciation

MAINICHI (Page 8) (Excerpts)
January 28, 2009

The number (estimate) of foreign travelers to Japan in 2008 increased 0.1 PERCENT over the previous year to 8.352 million, recording the fifth consecutive yearly rise, according to a report announced yesterday by the Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO). But the number sharply decreased in the latter half of the year due to economic recession. It now seems difficult to attain the government goal of raising foreign travelers to 10 million in 2010.

In December, the number dropped by 24.1 PERCENT, marking the second largest monthly dip, following the 34.2 PERCENT marked in May 2003 because of the effect of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The decrease last year is attributed to the appreciation of the yen, in addition to economic recession.

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Travelers from South Korea totaled 2.383 million, marking the largest number but 8.4 PERCENT below the previous year due to a weak won. Those from the U.S., beset with a financial crisis, and from Britain decreased by 5.8 PERCENT and 7.0 PERCENT, respectively.

10) U.S. to strengthen emission restrictions, welcomed by Japanese companies as "tailwind"

MAINICHI (Page 8) (Excerpts)
January 28, 2009

U.S. President Barack Obama has announced that the U.S. will strengthen restrictions on exhaust emissions from vehicles. Many in the Japanese automobile industry have welcomed this policy, with one executive of a leading automaker said: "Tighter restrictions would provide a tailwind for us." Japanese companies have leading-edge technologies to produce equipment for eco-friendly vehicles. A company executive said: "The U.S. new policy is expected to help boost our business."

President Obama's new policy will raise the level of emission controls in the U.S. to that of Japan and European countries. Specific measures have yet to be worked out, but the U.S. is expected to restrict sales of certain models and to urge makers to change their leading products from large-size models to compact

cars.

Japanese manufacturers have advanced technologies to produce fuel-efficient compact cars, as well as hybrid cars. In addition, many of the auto models produced in the U.S. have been designed to fit the regulations of Japan and Europe on the premise that they will be put on the global market. Given this, a leading company executive said: "I think there will be no need to review our sales and production strategies on a large scale." Honda Motor Co. developed a model that satisfies the U.S. Muskies Act, which was said to be the tightest in the world in 1973, boosting its profile in the U.S. A mid-ranking executive said: "We may be given a good opportunity to increase our sales."

11) Second supplementary budget enacted, based on constitutional rule giving priority Lower House's decision

MAINICHI (Top Play) (Almost Full)
January 28, 2009

The fiscal 2008 second supplementary budget that incorporates the flat-sum cash handout plan totaling 2 trillion yen was enacted on the evening of January 27. Following the confirmation made by the joint committee of both Houses that decisions by the ruling and opposition camps differ, Lower House Speaker Yohei Kono declared at a plenary session of the Lower House that the decision of the House of Representatives should be the decision of the Diet, based on Article 60 of the Constitution that gives priority to the decision reached by the Lower House. Following the end of the joint committee of both Houses, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) agreed to have four government speeches, including Prime Minister Taro Aso's policy speech, on the 28th. Now that the second extra budget has secured Diet approval, the focus of a battle between the ruling and opposition parties will shift to the fiscal 2009 budget. Debate on a hike in the consumption tax and the employment issue is expected to occur.

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The Diet on the 27th got into high gear for normalization, based on arbitration by Lower House Speaker Kono and Upper House President Eda. The joint council of both Houses held two sessions in the afternoon. It took only about two hours for both meetings to end because the DPJ did not hold out.

The joint council reported the outcome of the meeting to Chairman Kono. Kono then called to his office LDP Diet Policy Committee Chairman Tadamori Oshima and several others and asked them to postpone four government speeches. The postponement of those speeches was formally decided at a meeting between Oshima and his DPJ counterpart Kenji Yamaoka. A compromise was apparently made with the ruling parties postponing four government speeches in return for the DPJ accepting the termination of the joint committee of both Houses and passage of the second extra budget.

Oshima and Yamaoka also signed a confirmation paper noting: (1) delivering the four speeches on the 28th; and (2) holding interpellations in both Houses on the 29th, 30th and February 2. They also agreed to hold a Lower House Budget Committee meeting on February 3.

The DPJ will have Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama and former Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka, with whom the party forms a joint parliamentary group, stand at the podium at the Lower House interpellations on the 29th. It wants to toughen its confrontational stance toward the Aso administration by letting Tanaka display her "destructive power," according to a senior official of the party's Diet Policy Committee. The DPJ will pursue the ruling parties at the budget committee debate on: (1) the consumption tax; (2) amakudari practice; (3) reallocation of road construction special revenues; and the employment issue. It intends to suspend a vote in the Upper House on bills designed to secure fiscal resources to finance the flat-sum cash benefit plan as a card to shake up the ruling parties.

12) Second extra budget enacted, with opposition camp criticizing,

"Most of the public is against it"

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
January 28, 2009

When asked by reporters about the Diet passage of the fiscal 2008 second supplementary budget bill, Prime Minister Taro Aso stressed: "It was great that the bill containing employment measures and measures to directly support the livelihoods of the people was enacted." He added: "Unless the bills related to the budget are passed, we will not be able to implement a free gynecological exam plan and cash handout program, even if we wanted to."

All opposition parties criticized in unison the passage of the bill. Yukio Hatoyama, secretary of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), told reporters: "It is extremely regrettable that the bill to which a majority of the public opposes was enacted." He, referring to four government speeches to be delivered today, said: "It will be Prime Minister Aso's first and last policy speech."

Japanese Communist Party Diet Affairs Committee Keiji Kokuta criticized the cash handout program, saying: "It is the ultimate pork-barrel spending for the election." Social Democratic Party Secretary General Yasumasa Shigeno released a statement that went:

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"The public's view calling for dropping the cash handout program from the budget was rejected by the majority of the ruling coalition members in the Lower House."

13) Government: 32 watari cases in past three years

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
January 28, 2009

The government yesterday adopted in a cabinet meeting a written response stipulating that there had been a total 32 cases over the past three years from 2006 through 2008 of the watari practice in which ministries or agencies can arrange cushy jobs multiple times at government-related corporations for retiring senior bureaucrats.

During the three years, there were 19 watari cases in 2007, eight in 2008 and five in 2006. A total of 11 ministries and agencies arranged the watari practice for retired bureaucrats. The 11 ministries include: the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, which arranged six cases; the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, each of which carried out five cases; the National Personnel Authority, four watari cases, and other ministries. The written response states that as the center for personnel exchanges between the public and private sectors was established late last year, the center will strictly prohibit in principle the watari practice from now on. The government has adopted the written response to memorandum on questions presented by House of Representatives member Mitsunori Okamoto of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ).

14) Nakagawa dismissive about political realignment

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
January 28, 2009

Hidenao Nakagawa, a former secretary general of the Liberal Democratic Party, in the taping of an Asahi Newstar program expressed a view dismissive of political realignment occurring before the next general election. He said: "(Political realignment) might occur in the near future, but the Democratic Party of Japan is now united (to aim at) a change of government, so I don't think the party will make a move."

Former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori in an Asahi Shimbun interview had urged Nakagawa to leave the faction due to his words and actions regarding the political situation in connection with a consumption tax hike plan. Asked about this fact, Nakagawa expressed his displeasure, saying: "He did not say such a thing directly to me. I

am talking about policy, not the political situation. Such words as "rebellion" and "internal strife" come from the old LDP nature."

15) Many Machimura faction members calling for dropping Nakagawa from the faction's three-leader system

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
January 28, 2009

A gulf exposed with the consumption tax hike issue appears to be widening in the largest faction of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). In a meeting last night of former Chief Cabinet

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Secretary Nobutaka Machimura, who heads the faction, and first-term lawmakers, many said that the system of the faction being led by three leaders, including Machimura and Hidenao Nakagawa, was difficult to understand. The view that Nakagawa should be excluded from the leadership and Machimura alone should head the faction was presented in succession in the meeting.

Meanwhile, Nakagawa, who has strengthen criticism of the Aso administration, in the taping of an Asahi Newstar program yesterday, expressed his annoyance with former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori's criticism of his objection to the government's proposal of hiking the consumption tax by calling him a rebel. He said: "I think the word 'rebel' itself shows the nature of the old LDP."

Nakagawa, who served as chief cabinet secretary of the Mori cabinet, has close ties with Mori, but Mori recently has been highly dissatisfied with Nakagawa for his critical view of the Aso administration.

16) Poll: 63 PERCENT opposed to involvement in death sentence

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Abridged)
January 28, 2009

In a recent telephone-based nationwide poll conducted Jan. 24-25 by the Mainichi Shimbun, respondents were asked about the lay judge system which will start in May. When asked if citizens should take part in the court's death sentence, 63 PERCENT answered "no," with only 28 PERCENT saying "yes." Respondents were also asked whether they would participate if they are chosen to become lay judges. To this question, "yes" accounted for 49 PERCENT, fewer than a majority. The poll shows a strong feeling of resistance to the lay judge system that may hand down capital punishment.

The lay judge system is to try those charged with serious crimes, such as murder, robbery resulting in death or injury, and arson. Lay judges, chosen from among the people, will not only take part in a guilty-or-not-guilty judgment but will also determine appropriate punishment for the accused. In some cases, the death penalty is likely.

Among male respondents, 35 PERCENT answered "yes" when asked if they thought citizens should take part in a death sentence, with 60 PERCENT giving negative answers. Among female respondents, "yes" accounted for 21 PERCENT, with "no" reaching 66 PERCENT. As seen from the figures, the feeling of resistance was stronger among women. In the breakdown of generations, the highest figure of negative answers was 69 PERCENT among those in their 50's, and the lowest figure of negative answers was 55 PERCENT among those in their 20s.

In the meantime, 14 PERCENT answered that they were willing to participate in the lay judge system, with 35 PERCENT saying they would participate because it is mandatory to do so. In a previous face-to-face survey taken in September 2006, the proportion of those "willing" to participate was 17 PERCENT, with the proportion of those citing the "mandatory" reason at 34 PERCENT. The proportion of those who would not like to participate if possible was 46 PERCENT, the same as in the last survey. The results of the previous survey and the one taken this time cannot be simply compared due to different polling methodologies. However, there was no change in this tendency even though the lay judge system is about

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to start.

ZUMWALT